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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 03 TEL AVIV 005708

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/16/2015

TAGS: PREL PGOV KWBG IS SETTLEMENTS ISRAELI PALESTINIAN AFFAIRS

SUBJECT: ECF UPDATES ON BARRIER AND DESCRIBES MAJOR

CONCERNS ABOUT POLICE STATION IN E-1

REF: A. JERUSALEM 4006

1B. JERUSALEM 3869

1C. TEL AVIV 4653

1D. TEL AVIV 0707

Classified By: Deputy Chief of Mission Gene Cretz for reasons 1.4 (b) a
nd (d)

This cable has been cleared by Consulate General Jerusalem

11. (S) Summary and Comment: Sounding an alarmist note regarding GOI settlement plans in a September 1 meeting with econoff, Economic Cooperation Foundation (ECF) officials (protect) urged the USG to intervene to prevent the building of the police station in E-1 and said that a planned "new Jewish urban belt around East Jerusalem" would render impossible its ever becoming a Palestinian capital. They view the building of the police station as an excuse to build infrastructure in E-1, making it easier for the GOI to later build homes in the area. Also, they maintained that moving the station from its present location in Ras al-Amud would allow the settlement of Ma'ale Zeitim there to expand as well. One ECF official warned that a bitter Likud election campaign between Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and Binyamin Netanyahu could be "a disaster" for Jerusalem as the focus of political competition becomes who can build up more Jewish areas in Arab sections of the city. In addition, ECF claimed to have been informed by sources in the Ministry of Defense (MOD) that Sharon does not really want a separation barrier around Ma'ale Adumim, and is counting on U.S. pressure and the Israeli High Court to stop the construction. The ECF official could not explain the rationale for such a reported Sharon position. Given that construction has started in some locations of the "urban belt" around East Jerusalem, and that GOI military positions in the past have turned into residential communities, ECF's comments should not be discounted. End summary and comment.

The Problems with E-1

12. (S) Boaz Karni (protect), Economic Cooperation Foundation (ECF) treasurer, told econoff on September 1 that the original E-1 police station plan called for it to be built on private land. He was skeptical of the GOI claim that it was the road leading to the station rather than the station itself that passed through private property, and that the problem was resolved by moving the road. Karni strongly suggested that the USG make an official request for zoning maps of the area and the building plan. He expressed surprise that the planning for the station took only three months, and characterized this as "moving very quickly."

13. (S) Karni described two major concerns about the E-1 police station plan, and asked the U.S. "to stop it now." He maintained that the construction is "an excuse to build infrastructure," such as electricity and water lines, and that houses would soon follow. In addition, removing the station from its current location in Ras al-Amud allows the expansion of the Ma'ale Zeitim settlement, occupied by national-religious extremists, across the street (ref A). Ma'ale Zeitim currently consists of 52 apartments, of which 35 are occupied. According to Col. (ret.) Shaul Arieli (protect), ECF consultant and member of the Council for Peace and Security, the settlers there have wanted to construct a second apartment building "for years." Demolishing the police station will make room for three or four new apartment buildings, which could extend the neighborhood all the way to the Mount of Olives. (Note: The spokesperson from Ateret Cohanim, a pro-settlements Israeli NGO that purchases property in the Old City and East Jerusalem to increase the Jewish presence in those areas, told ConGen poloffs September 6 that construction of the second apartment building in Ma'ale Zeitim would begin following the settlement of two pending lawsuits initiated by Palestinian residents in the area. End note.) Karni concluded, vis-a-vis the upcoming elections, that Jerusalem will "be a disaster" if it becomes a pawn in the coming election campaign between Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and Binyamin Netanyahu.

Separation Barrier Updates

14. (S) Arieli told econoff that, according to MOD sources, Sharon does not want a separation barrier encircling the northern part of the Ma'ale Adumim settlement bloc. The sources claim that he wants to leave the area "open," with only a simple wire fence, security cameras, and a patrol road. Arieli could not explain the rationale behind this. He said his sources said Sharon issued the land confiscation orders in the southern part of Ma'ale Adumim for internal political reasons (ref B), but that the PM is counting on Palestinian objections in the High Court and U.S. pressure to stop construction of the barrier in the area altogether. Asked if this did not leave an opening into Jerusalem for potential terror attacks, Arieli responded that "no one gets in" through this area in any event. Arieli showed econoff on computer-based imagery that the northern part of the fence that Sharon reportedly does not want extends from approximately the military base north of E-1 to Allon settlement.

15. (S) Arieli reported that he has been testifying at the High Court during its current deliberations on the route of the separation barrier in the area of Qalandiya and al-Ram, northeast of Jerusalem. He said that he had suggested alternative barrier routes to the court, and that High Court President Aharon Barak had promised a ruling for this area by the end of September or early October -- before the start of the Jewish High Holy Days. (Note: MOD officials told emboffs on September 7 that they expected a ruling in late October. End note.) Arieli explained that although the Court cannot accept the Council's recommendations on the route of the barrier, it can reject the GOI's planned route. The GOI can then officially adopt the Council's suggestions, as happened with the route in the Beit Surik area in June 2004.

New Jewish Settlements in Jerusalem

16. (S) Arieli detailed eight new Jewish settlements, including E-1, planned for the Jerusalem area, and said they were all in different stages of planning (ref C). The projects would add an additional 30,000 units, or about 150,000 people, and create what Arieli called a "new Jewish urban belt around East Jerusalem," ensuring that there would be "no Palestinian capital in East Jerusalem." These projects include:

-- Emek Ayalot, part of the master plan of the Giv'at Ze'ev settlement northwest of Jerusalem.

-- Gevah, near the Neve Ya'akov settlement northeast of Jerusalem; Arieli noted that this neighborhood would create Israeli contiguity from Jerusalem to the settlement of Adam, while cutting Palestinian contiguity between Hizma and al-Ram.

-- A settlement in the Palestinian village of Wadi al-Jawz, northeast of the Old City; econoff noted that this neighborhood would create Israeli contiguity between the eastern part of the Old City and Hebrew University on Mt. Scopus.

-- E-1 between Ma'ale Adumim and Jerusalem; Arieli noted that E-1 is 12 square kilometers, almost twice the current 7 square kilometers built-up area of Ma'ale Adumim.

-- Qidmat Zion, adjacent to the separation barrier next to the Palestinian village of Abu Dis in East Jerusalem; Arieli noted that this neighborhood will consist of approximately 200 units, with two structures already built. (Note: According to the Ateret Cohanim spokesperson, Qidmat Zion is approved for 300 units. End note.)

-- Nof Zion, near the Palestinian village of Jabal al-Mukabir, south of the Old City; Arieli noted that this neighborhood will consist of approximately 350 units. (Note: ConGen poloff on August 30 observed bulldozers leveling and clearing land, and preparing a new road to the construction site. End note.)

-- Har Homa 2, an extension of the Har Homa settlement southeast of Jerusalem.

-- Nof Yael, near the Palestinian village of al-Wallajah southwest of Jerusalem.

Comment

17. (S) ECF officials are experts on the settlements enterprise in Israel, and their advice on the settlements planned for East Jerusalem and the police station in E-1 is worthy of consideration. Construction has already begun in Nof Zion and Qidmat Zion, and as the planning process moves along for the other settlements, it will be harder to stop these projects from being built. GOI contacts have told us

in the past, for example, that once a plan is completely approved, the construction companies and municipalities have a "legal right" to build, so the GOI is loath to prevent the project's execution. ECF's concern that building the police station in E-1 is an excuse to lay down infrastructure is valid given the examples of Nahal (or military) settlements that turned into residential communities such as Elisha, Nahal Gevaot, Negohot, Rachelim, and Tal Menashe (ref D).
End comment.

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